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[The relational turn in island geographies: bringing together island, sea and ship relations and the case of the Landship.](#)

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THE RELATIONAL TURN IN ISLAND GEOGRAPHIES: BRINGING TOGETHER ISLAND, SEA AND SHIP RELATIONS AND THE CASE OF THE LANDSHIPⁱ

ABSTRACT:-

Island studies is a growing field of research. A relational turn has recently taken place in island studies alongside relational turns in associated fields of research, including oceanic and ship geographies (although not always in conversation with them). While all three now challenge the land-locked nature of geography and related disciplines, this paper suggests that islands, oceans and ships should not always be reductively conceptualised in isolation, because they are often bound together through complex and shifting relations and assemblages. After reviewing debates and conceptual gaps in the critical island, sea and ship literatures, the paper makes this argument by reference to an island dance performance and social institution that is not wholly of the island, the ship or sea, called the Barbados' Landship.

INTRODUCTION

Some 600 million people live on islands (10% of the world's population) and 44 of the world's 192 sovereign states are island states (Baldacchino and Royle, 2010). The island Geographer Elaine Stratford (2008, p. 16) says that island studies have historically been 'marginal in geography in the same way that islands seem peripheral to continents'. Yet, as Stratford points out, island studies is now a growing field internationally and geographers are playing a prominent role (Steinberg, 2001; Dodds and Royle, 2003; Mountz, 2014). This paper makes a distinct contribution to research on the social and cultural geography of small islands. A relational turn has recently taken place in island studies alongside relational turns in associated fields, including oceanic and ship geographies (DeLoughrey, 2007; Stratford et al, 2011; Anderson, 2012; Hasty and Peters, 2012; Steinberg and Peters, 2014; Anim-Addo, 2011). Encouraging greater interaction between these three fields of study, this paper foregrounds how islands, oceans and ships should not always be reductively conceptualised in isolation, because they are often

inextricably interwoven into complex, multifaceted and shifting arrays of relations and assemblages. This argument is made by analysing an interesting island dance performance and social institution that is not wholly of the island, ship, or sea, called the Barbados' Landship.

Despite the interchanges between critical island, oceanic and ship literatures (see below), the argument of this paper is that there are now conceptual gaps that should be more fully explored. On the one hand, an important relational turn has recently taken place in island studies that foregrounds island-to-island and archipelagic relations (Stratford et al, 2011), but in the process the ocean itself as a space of island experience and history now runs the risk of being downplayed (Hayward, 2012; Hay, 2013). On the other hand, critical oceanic studies – in their efforts to encourage scholars to think from a materialised, liquid sea – have recently tended to downplay the islands that are not only of the sea but (along with ships), also form an important platform from which humans experience the sea (Steinberg, 2005). Islands are, like ships, in a phenomenological sense constitutive of the sea. This paper then seeks to build bridges between what has started to feel like disconnected critical literatures of oceanic, ship and island studies. Here my employment of the framing term 'critical' seeks to capture something of the present moment – the intensity and effort being mobilised in contemporary scholarship that seeks to conceptually unpack and interrogate what we mean by 'the ocean', 'the ship' and 'the island'.

RECENT DEBATES IN CRITICAL ISLAND, OCEANIC AND SHIP LITERATURES

If one overarching theme characterises recent debates in island, oceanic and ship geographies, it is that all three increasingly engage the relational, material and mobility turns in the social sciences and humanities (Massey, 2005; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Pugh, et al, 2009). Today, cultural and material practices tend not to be imbued with fixed or static meaning, but are instead understood as constituted relationally through the materialities of movements and complex assemblages (Hasty and Peters, 2012; Anderson, 2012; Steinberg, 2013). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) an assemblage is less a fixed thing with defined borders and a clear identity, than a process: a continual de- and

re-composition that is only ever partially stabilized (Grove and Pugh, 2015). Assemblages are never stable because they are effects of force relations brought into relation with one another in particular ways, which can always potentially be reconfigured in different ways. Within the context of this paper, such assemblages could include anything from island archipelagos like the Caribbean, or moving aircraft carrier fleets, or wind-turbines formations, as these assemblages dynamically evolve and rework human and more-than-human relations over time. With such dynamism in mind, contemporary island, oceanic and ship scholarship further incorporates a concern for movement and mobilities, which 'encompasses both the large-scape movements of people, objects, capital and information across the world, as well as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life' (Hannam et al, 2006:1). This shared concern with relationalities, movements and mobilities is important because it holds open new possibilities for exploring how island, sea and ship assemblages come together and dynamically reform in different contexts over time.

As I now explain, there are signs that recent island, oceanic and ship scholarship is ready to address such possibilities; but there is also a need for more conversations *across* the three disciplines too, because at times it feels like they are drifting apart. Taking island studies first, the relational turn here is taking place against the backdrop of a particularly prominent theme within island scholarship today; namely, a concern for the paradoxical nature of island spaces (Baldacchino, 2006). Today islands are regularly foregrounded as simultaneously open and closed, exclusive and inclusive, insular and at the same time embedded within complex multi-relational systems (Gillis, 2014; Edmond and Smith, 2003; Mains, 2003; Steinberg, 2005; 2013; Greenhough, 2006; Noxolo and Preziuso, 2012; Clark and Tsai, 2014). Islands draw us toward the sense of a fixed object while at the same time remaining the product of multi-relational forces. Here seminal texts by Denning (1980), Hau'ofa (1994), Bongie (1998), Steinberg (2005), DeLoughrey (2007) and Stratford et al (2011), engage the paradoxical nature of island life and through them relationality has become a central concern at key island conferences (e.g. International Small Island Studies Association; Grydehøj et al, 2015). Less fixated upon borders of land/sea, island/mainland, the relational turn outlined by Stratford et al (2011) unsettles static tropes of singularity, isolation, dependency and peripherality. It emphasises *island movements* rather than static island form, the 'power of cross-currents and connections', and a world of interconnected islands rather 'islands of the world' (Stratford et al, 2011,

p. 273). Stratford et al (2011, p. 113) elaborate how much contemporary scholarship illuminates 'island spaces as inter-related, mutually constituted and co-constructed: as island and island'. What I have elsewhere called 'archipelagic thinking' (see, Pugh, 2013a) foregrounds how islands – which in contemporary debates include anything from desert islands, moving aircraft carrier fleets and wind-turbines – are part of shifting arrays of assemblages, constellation and relations (Stratford et al, 2011, p. 113; McMahon; 2003)ⁱⁱ.

But archipelagic thinking throws up many tensions for island studies too. For example, in his fascinating historical analysis of sixteenth-century portolan charts Steinberg (2005) explores how islands were historically signified as territorial barriers and obstacles amidst maritime routes, so that in the late sixteenth-century this imaginary influenced the emergent concept of the territorial state. Thus, Steinberg posits both a conceptual and aesthetic link between these territorial representations of islands and states and ongoing dilemmas for those who seek to comprehend (or cartographically represent) the more fluid nature of islands archipelagos divided between multiple states. This representation of the island – on the one hand suggesting that the island is the antithesis of the ocean, while on the other suggesting that the island exists only as an object on sea-routes (in contrast with mainland destinations) – reflects well the recent relational and archipelagic turns in island studies.

What Steinberg's (2001) work also does here is remind us that the movements of the sea are ever-present in small-island life. The sea foregrounds questions of flux, associated with ripples, waves, swirls and rages, which are ever-present in the shifting entanglements of islands and archipelagos (DeLoughrey, 2007). Such concerns potentially position island scholarship well within the wider contemporary debates presently taking place in geography and related disciplines which increasingly foreground the ocean (Steinberg, 1999; Lambert et al, 2006; Bravo, 2006; Driver and Martins, 2006; Peters, 2010; 2014; Anderson, 2012; Blum, 2013; Anderson and Peters, 2014). As David Lambert et al (2006, p. 480) ask geographers: 'What if the seas were shifted from the margins to the center of academic vision?' Answering this call, scholars are currently interrogating the sea through such tropes as vastness (Lambert et al, 2006); the sublime (Hay, 2013); fear of the unknown, madness and chaos (Stratford et al, 2011);

questions of safety, security and fragility (Lambert et al, 2006; Driver and Martins, 2006); the more-than-human (Stratford et al, 2011; Peters, 2012; Anderson, 2012; Steinberg, 2013; Pugh, 2013a; 2013b); and drifting (Peters, 2014); to name a few. However, while welcoming this oceanic turn, Steinberg (2013) calls for vigilance about not reducing the sea to a simple medium of transport from A to B; as we instead more concertedly start to explore the materialities, mobilities and relationalities of ocean life. He argues that geographers have done much to destabilise fixed notions of time and space on land, and thereby encouraged a shift toward relational territorial geographies. But when it comes to the sea questions of relationality, materiality and mobilities are far less engaged. As Steinberg (2013, p158) says, in key texts such as Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* 'one never gets wet'. This is while the ocean is not a space that merely facilitates movement, it is also a relational space that is constituted by movement itself. Such critical concerns with the ocean could now be more fruitfully extended to the above discussed relational turn in island studies as well; which, as Hay (2013) points out, presently tends to foreground island-island at the expense of island-sea relations (see below). This suggests the need for island and oceanic scholars to more fully engage each other in thinking relationality between their disciplines, as well as within them. As Hayward (2012) argues, we now need to develop new conceptual apparatus that more fully engage the depth of the interrelations between islands and seas. Here Steinberg and Peters (2015, p.247) have recently coined a new field of oceanic research they call 'wet ontologies' – one that really brings to the fore how the sea is 'indisputably voluminous, stubbornly material, and unmistakably undergoing continual reformation'. Such work pushes the boundaries of critical oceanic research, addressing not only the *undertheorising* of the sea in political economy-inspired works like Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, but also the *overtheorising* of the sea by philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari (who call the sea a 'smooth space *par excellence*') and Foucault's unpublished work (where the ship is 'heterotopic *par excellence*' (both cited in Steinberg, 2013, p. 158)). Steinberg and Peter's (2015) work, perhaps more than any other at this time, unpacks how the sea has volume, forces and movement that matters. It would therefore be useful to think through how both island and oceanic scholars could develop such work in future; not only in their separate fields, but also through new innovative conversations and experimental approaches taken together.

One pathway into such concerns would be to engage the relationship between island, ocean and ship geographies, which are the final body of literature this review section considers. Recently there has been a quiet revolution in the geographies of ships, boats and watercraft. In response to a previous lack of interest (see Peters, 2010), convincing arguments are now being made about the importance of ship geographies. The increasing publications include those on slave ships (Postma, 2003); whaling ships (Bravo, 2006); pacific canoes (Bonnemaison, 1994; DeLoughrey, 2007); exploration and voyaging (Ryan, 2006); cargo ships (Birtchnell and Urry, 2015); super-yachts (Spence, 2014); shipwrecks (Driver and Martins, 2006); drifting (Peters, 2014); convict ships (Peters and Turner, 2015); passenger shipping networks (Ong et al, 2014); ships, spaces of jurisdiction and surveillance (Peters, 2014); pirate ships (Hasty, 2014); surfboards (Anderson, 2014); oil drilling (Steinberg, 2011); autonomous ocean communities (Steinberg et al, 2012); pop-pirate radio ships (Peters, 2012); and mutiny (Davies, 2014), for examples. As in the above relational turns in island and oceanic studies, this renewed attention to critical ship geographies is giving 'scholars the opportunity to reframe the history of the discipline' (Hasty and Peters, 2012:660). Today, as argued for by Peters (2014), the ship is not a reductive object that simply takes people and things from A to B across the ocean. Instead, publications foreground 'the role of process in the making of space and mobility at sea', and ships and watercraft are seen to play an important role (Hasty, 2014, p350). There is growing interest in the 'ever-fluctuating rhythms and routines' associated with the changing operations of ships and the wider world within which they fit (Anim-Addo et al, 2014, p346). Work by Peters (2012) on pop-pirate ships and Anderson (2012) on surfboarding, for example, does not understand watercraft and oceans as discrete entities, but rather as dynamic and shifting assemblages associated with affective intensities and convergences between human and more-than-human relations.

However, a problem with these debates in ship, oceanic and island geographies is that while they often engage themes of relationality *within* their own distinctive fields of research, island and oceanic studies in particular have started to drift apart in recent years. Thus, scholars at the forefront of the relational turn in island studies, like Stratford et al (2011), have been criticised by Hay (2013) for downplaying the role of the sea in island life and for instead focusing too much upon island-island relations. While there are

problems with Hay's (2013) critique (see below), this more generally highlights how island and oceanic studies can at times feel too separate and the need for more productive conversations between them. Clearly, this is not to say that islands and oceans must always be brought together in analysis; but that we need to be ever-vigilant about how islands (like ships) are in an important phenomenological sense of the sea. We also need to be vigilant that oceanic studies does not drift too far apart from islands as well. As I have outlined, exciting debates are presently taking place around the relational turns within the three different fields of scholarship; but there is now a need for more productive and concerted conversations that cut across them (Hayward, 2012). This paper adopts both an empirical and conceptual approach to addressing such concerns, and employs the 'Landship' to foreground why island, sea and ship relationalities can, and perhaps more often should, be examined together.

THE LANDSHIP: OPENNING DESCRIPTIONS AND REMARKS

The Landship is a dance and social welfare institution that is now unique to the island of Barbados. The Landship has played an important role in Barbados' history, particularly between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries when Landships of varying size and membership were scattered across Barbados' eleven parishes. Although today there are only 20 active members in a single Landship maintaining the tradition, at its high point in the 1930s there were around three fleets of sixty ships across the island, including over 3000 men and 800 women. As I explain below, the Landship evolved through complex and dynamically shifting island, ship and sea relations – as symbolized in the very name Land+Ship. The Landship takes the form of relations created on board ship and translates them into a land-based association and performance. It forms a kind of metaphorical bridge between island, sea and ship that is performative of social connectivity on land. Rather than include a static image as an illustration in this paper, the Landship is better perceived as a moving performance (e.g. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLUXkUK_GFU).

The Landship is a ship that does not go to sea. It is not a physical ship, but its members wear naval-style uniforms and meet regularly at a 'dock' to enact pseudo-naval

manoeuvres. Each Landship tends to be named after a British vessel, such as the *Rodney*, *Iron Duke*, *Victory Naval* and *Nelson*. Landship members are ranked according to British Navy hierarchy. The leader is Lord High Admiral, then there is Admiral, Captain, Boatswain, Quarter Master, Commander, Doctor, Matron, Engineer and so on. The 'dock' is usually a building that has a 'mast' on the roof and where members pay weekly subscriptions. As one Landship member said during an interview with the author of this paper, 'the ship's bell is sounded, and then the crew of the Landship are piped on deck and do our drills'. These drills have evolved over time through changing island, sea and ship relations, and from on-board ship activities – such as 'stoking the boiler', 'full steam ahead', and 'hauling the anchor' – that are often accentuated and given affect by the crew simultaneously recreating life aboard ship and in 'rough seas'. As another interviewee said, the crew cannot finish the performance and 'return to land' until they have received permission from their high ranking 'naval officer'. Vernon Watson, who has commanded the Landship for over thirty years, says:

'Whatever we do is an interpretation of whatever happens on the ship. If you look at the 'rough seas' manoeuvre that is the highlight of the parade; you have instances where you are at sea and meet an iceberg or rough weather and it's obvious the ship will rock from side to side, passengers may be thrown over deck, so you have to put them below deck, so we do the same thing.' (cited in Meredith, 2015, p. 88-89).

To date, the limbo Caribbean dance is probably the most famous island dance to foreground island, sea and ship relations (Brathwaite, 1967; Harris, 2005). There are numerous overlaps between the limbo and Landship, but key differences too. These differences highlight how the Landship performs a much wider range of island, sea and ship relations than those associated with slavery alone (see below). As this paper explains, the Landship actualises a far longer history and expansive geography of shifting island, sea and ship relations over many hundreds of years. But to start with, we can turn to one similarity between the limbo and Landship: the 'wangle low'. The wangle low is a limbo-type of wukking-up move re-enacting the actions of slaves forced to climb into the top hold of the slave ship 'in preparation for the transatlantic crossing' (Fergusson-Jacobs, 2013, p. 84). Slave ships tended to be divided into two levels and the wangle low demonstrates what slaves did when lowering themselves into tight top levels where they

were unable to sit upright. Many slaves were crammed into spaces 'with an average of six to seven square feet and rarely more than two or three feet of head space' (Postma, 2003, p. 23). As in the limbo, the Landship wangle low engages the materiality of 'the ship itself', as one interviewee said, and how ships were specifically designed and structured to navigate the perilous conditions of the middle passage. As another interviewee pointed out, the Landship performs these complex ship materialities – 'in homage to the ancestors', and, in doing so, foregrounds the associated political economy of slave ships that 'come to land on the island of Barbados'.

But while the limbo dance is often reduced to re-enactments of slave ship activities (Brathwaite, 1967; Harris, 2005), the same cannot and should not be said of the Landship. As Wood (2010, p.172) says, '[a]ll representations of slave dancing [more generally] seem to fall to a greater or lesser degree under the long shadow cast by the middle passage.' While the Landship obviously connects to slave ships (eg the wangle-low), the incorporation of many other manoeuvres – such as 'full steam ahead', 'iceberg ahead' and 'engineer, stoke the fire' – are illustrative of more recent and evolving ship, island and oceanic geographies over time. These changing relations include, among other things, the later introduction of steam ships, mail ships, shipping societies, container ships, and others into Barbadian island life. The Landship performance illustrates how these changing relations between islands, seas and ships are not static, but dynamically evolving assemblages that incorporate a range of trajectories, and a more contemporary consciousness into the performance and social institution. As one Landship member said, 'the Landship come to ground in many ways; from many histories'. For this reason, the Landship offers itself as a new way to think about and conceive of island, sea and ship relations. It is performed (as a dance, symbolizing specific actions at sea) and performative of social connectivity on land. But it also works as a metaphorical bridge that actualises dynamically changing island, sea and ship relations over time.

Such concerns further draw attention to the performative geographies of dance (Brathwaite, 1967; Matles 1998; Nash, 2003). Matless (1998), for example, charts how Morris dancing in England both performs and unsettles timeless notions of Englishness by enacting micro-geographies of bodily practices that are intertwined with wider social, economic and cultural relations. As demonstrated in this paper, the Landship similarly

entangles performance with, among other things, the changing workings of capital, nationhood, transnational cultures and gender over time. But while connections between the Landship and other dance forms such as Morris dancing could be pursued further, this paper is distinctive because it focuses upon how the Landship offers a new way of performing the dynamically changing sea and ship geographies of island life.

Although now mostly in demand for dance performances, historically Landships provided important welfare and organizational structure for the poor; particularly during the 1920s and 1930s. The Landship meetings are called 'susu'; a term transported to Barbados during the middle passage by the Fante peoples of Africa which means 'monetary contribution'. Although there are similar arrangements to susu in Trinidad, St Lucia and Jamaica (in Jamaica called 'partner'), and Landships may have existed in St Kitts and St Vincent, today the Landship is unique to Barbados (Meredith, 2015). It is difficult to ascertain changing Landship membership over time, but the late Sir Clyde Gollop – Landship Patron from 1971 until his death in 2004 – believed that in the 1920s there were 60 or 70 Landships (Meredith, 2015). By the 1930s, it is generally agreed by Landship scholars 'there were three fleets of sixty ships with membership of over 3,000 men and 800 women' (Fergusson-Jacobs, 2013, p. 4). Although Landships probably existed in some form in the mid-1800s, it was not until the 1930s that women were permitted membership (see below); so that for a significant part of their history Landships engaged questions of fraternity, masculinity and homosocial networks. Between World War II and the 1950s Landship membership declined to single figures, although numbers increased again until the 1970s, when the Landship Association was formed by amalgamating remaining Landships. There were five Landships in 1974 with around 700 members. But by 1991 there were only 60 members, increasing to around 100 in 1997, with only around 20 active people today (Meredith, 2015).

This paper reports empirical research conducted by the author into the Landship between 1998 and 2014. The eastern most Caribbean country, Barbados is a parliamentary democracy that gained independence from the UK in 1966, is 431 square kilometres in size and has a population of 289,680 (July 2014 est. Index Mundi, 2014). In total two-years ethnographic work was undertaken (1998/9, 2003, 2011, 2014) into the Landship and a range of other Barbadian institutions involving qualitative and

quantitative research (Pugh and Potter, 2000; Pugh and Potter, 2003; Pugh, 2005a; 2005b; Pugh and Momsen, 2006). The author conducted interviews with 20 people involved in the Landship, 15 Landship displays were observed, relevant documentation and archival material collected. The research also included detailed observations of how the Landship works in a range of formal and informal settings.

ORIGIN MYTHS, NAVY, EMPIRE AND SLAVE SHIPS

Questions of origins are recurrent in island studies (Walcott, 1998; Steinberg, 2005). The unstable character of island relations (Brathwaite's (1999) 'tidalectics') always seems to raise the problem of where to draw the line – both in history and geography. This sense of uncertainty is compounded in the case of the Landship, where no records exist to give an accurate history of the founder or early origins (Meredith, 2015). The Landship probably emerged in the 1800s or earlier, but there is no clear historical or geographical origin (in part because the Barbados Press was historically disinterested in the lower classes, such as Landship members, Meredith, 2015). Despite this, important origin myths exist, which, right from the start, connect the Landship's navel string to the sea.

Firstly, many Barbadians believe that the Landship was started in 1863 by Moses Wood, a sailor serving in the British Navy. Wood may have been called Moses 'Ward', and may have been a white Englishman, a coloured Barbadian from Cardiff and Southampton, or a sailor who was a returning Barbadian national. This sailor may have wanted to re-enact the camaraderie and discipline he experienced with the British Navy; bringing it to the island. Indeed, somewhat reflective of Bhabha's (1994) conceptualisation of colonial subjectivities, the Landship is often called 'Little England's Navy' in Barbadian newspapers (Burrowes, 2005, p.216). Although many other Barbadians now accept Ward was not the originator (he was born in 1860, almost certainly after the Landship started), this origin myth cements the importance of 'the ship coming to land', as one of my interviewees said.

The origin myth of Moses Ward starts us off with a rather positive image of the figure of the ship in Barbadian history and the Landship (compared to other origin myths, see below). The famous travels of *Olaudah Equiano*, possibly transported from either Africa

or the United States to Barbados, and recounted in 1789, illustrate the changing fortunes of slaves aboard ships (Equiano, 2001); with some slaves being able to earn money as mariners. Although the British Navy rarely treated ex-slaves well (Bolster, 2009), the perception that those who got work on ships would achieve relative freedom encouraged 'several thousand former slaves' to reach England, and 'naval personnel often assisted ex-slaves' (Foy, 2011, p.21). However, while the Landship origin myth of Moses Ward plays into these more positive aspects of life aboard ships, other origin myths engage more oppressive ship histories and geographies associated with ships, slavery and empire, as these have become entangled in the Landship and Barbadian island life.

The economy of Barbados in the eighteenth century was built upon sugar and slavery. As Eric Williams (1944/1994: 57) explains, the slave-trade 'naturally drew in its wake a tremendous development of shipping and shipbuilding'. Barbados had around 40% of the total share of sugar production for the West Indies in the early 1700s (Beckles, 1990, p.69), and shipbuilders themselves were one of the largest exporters of slaves. But not only was the massive shipbuilding programme linked directly to the slave trade, it was also linked to the wider imaginary of British Navy and empire (Lambert and Lester, 2006; Lambert, 2007). Slave ships often doubled as merchant ships and man-o-wars; so that ships became an 'admirable nursery' for seamen and merchantmen and 'invaluable aides to the navy in time of war' (Williams, 1944/1994:58). Indeed, the strong links between slave ships and the navy led many shipbuilders to argue that abolishing the slave trade would 'strike at the very roots of Britain's naval and imperial supremacy' (Williams, 1944/1994, p.59). As Lambert and Lester (2004) astutely observe, the figure of 'the ship' became symbolic for supporters and abolitionists of the slave trade alike. Although one might think that as the abolitionist movement gained ground in the 1800s and the threat of Napoleon declined the British naval fleet would need less ships, in practice something different happened. In the early 1800s British shipbuilders managed to justify and reinvigorate shipbuilding programmes by directly linking ships to the moralising zeal of abolitionists themselves. This provided a reinvigorated role for British Navy ships in the wider world associated with the new geographical imaginaries of policing the abolition of the slave trade. As Benton (2005, p. 704) points out, ships have often

‘... played a dual role as sources of order in the oceans: they were islands of law with their own regulations and judicial personnel, and they were representatives of ‘municipal’ legal authorities—vectors of crown law thrusting into ocean space.’

Such concerns tap directly into the history of the Landship, because a second origin myth speculates that the Landship originator was a sailor on a British man-o-war (c 1840s) patrolling West Africa’s coast to stop the slave trade (Meredith, 2015). Indeed, many Landship movements (such as the wangle-low) explicitly perform the oppression of slaves on slave ships. My interviewees reiterated that the Landship was designed to bring this oppression to the attention of the wider world:

Nobody knows where the Landship come from, but in my mind, my consciousness, it arrived in the working person’s consciousness from the conditions of slavery.

The Landship is a consciousness of the slave ship.

Three specific Landship manoeuvres are illustrative. The first takes place around the Maypole flag (the Landship’s ‘mast’) and re-enacts the stretching of slaves occasionally given a rest by the ship’s captain from the harsh conditions below deck. Although permitting slaves this exercise, the captain also often forced them to entertain his crew by dancing and performing ‘drills on the upper deck of the ship, in the shadow of the masts’ and this is today performed in the Landship (Fergusson-Jacobs, 2013, p. 86). A second movement – also involving the ‘ship’s mast’ – has eight ribbons tied around the top of the mast that simultaneously represent the eight legs of the African Ananci trickster spiderⁱⁱⁱ. Here, as in the limbo dance that also mimics the Ananci spider, the materialities of slave ships are literally intertwined with questions of spiritual freedom, adaptation and oppression on board a ship that ‘comes to land’ in the form of the Landship. Finally, and related to this, the Landship performative call ‘man overboard’ represents a slave who has got free of chains, jumped overboard and drowned. This call signals slaves who may have believed that although their bodies drowned in the Atlantic sea they would still be free to spiritually return back across the Atlantic ocean to their motherland.

STEAM SHIPS AND MAILING SHIPS

Such concerns point toward the Landship being a truly multifaceted island institution that brings to land complex and dynamically changing island, sea and ship relations over time. In this way, the Landship reworks and blurs the boundaries between land, sea and ship. It is not wholly of the island, the sea or the ship; but enacts and performs unstable assemblages of shifting inter-relations over time. To understand this more comprehensively we now need to move beyond the figure of the slave ship and naval vessel into a more recent set of relations that further incorporate the role of steam and mail ships in the Landship. For example, the 'Tuk' music (played by tin flute, kettle and bass drum) that accompanies the Landship is considered by its members to be the 'steam engine' of the whole performance; a performance that is further punctuated by such calls as 'full steam ahead', 'stoking the boiler', and 'engineer, stoke the fire'. Slave ships were not likely to have been steam powered, so the Tuk music is illustrative of a more contemporary consciousness and recent re-configuration of island, sea and ship relations performed by the Landship.

Kettle drums (integral to the Tuk band) were certainly played by slaves during the earliest days of Barbados' colonialization by Britain. As Ligon (1657/1998, p.48) wrote '[i]n the afternoons on *Sundayes*, they [the slaves] have their Mufick, which is of kettle drums'. But today – incorporated into the 'steam engine' of the Landship – the kettle drum reflects a more contemporary island consciousness associated with the arrival of steam ships in the 1820s and 30s. The first steam-vessel arrived in Barbados in Carlisle Bay on the 26th of March 1827, after a thirty hours' passage from St. Vincent. Called the 'Libertador', it was probably the first steam ship most people from the island had seen. Schomburgk (1884/1998, p.423-424) recalls how this ship – and its companion, the 'Hamilton' – were 'the property of Colonial Hamilton who owned land and cattle on the Orinoco. Hamilton conceived of the plan of establishing regular communication between the islands'. Although a regular network was not fully established until mail steamers arrived some years later, the broader point is that the Landship is not only powered the slave ship, but also by steam as well. The Tuk music that drives the Landship explicitly mimics the steam engine and in doing so provides the rhythmic beat that drives the performance forward. As the Landship begins, at first the 'crew' chug along slowly to the

Tuk rhythm. But then the Landship gradually picks up speed and eventually reaches 'full steam'. As Willcock (1997, p.4, in Meredith, 2015, p.95-96) describes:

'[t]he stages through which the 'engine' goes as it pressurizes for the 'trip on the open seas'. The waltz would be used for the 'warm up' of about 50lbs.; then the fassie, or march, would increase it to about 80lbs. The Tuk beat would take it to over 100lbs. mark the 'ship' would then be sailing at full speed, displayed by the manoeuvre of the 'crew' as they go about their duties'.

Curwen Best (2001, p. 53) says the Tuk rhythms

'gave fuller form and expression to the mimetic antics of the landship's sailors. And it also fostered that link between performers and audience who were mesmerized by the repeated infectious rhythms. It is quite common to see the supposed observer getting into the rhythm and vicariously submerging him/herself into the performance antics of the landship's crew. It is when the ship is at full steam with '160 pounds of pressure' (the amount of pressure which was required to propel the actual steam boat at full speed), that rhythmic improvisation and the expressiveness of dance take over. At this point there is an unconscious proximity to the state of possession which within the Caribbean one associates with Shango, Voodoo, Pocomania, Zion and Baptist rituals.'

My own interviewees from the Landship tended to associate this final expressive point of rhythmic improvisation with 'the essence of Barbados and the Caribbean archipelago' – their argument being that the Landship breaks away from the reductive labelling of 'Little England's Navy' or 'little Africa', as the island of Barbados breaks away from the mainland. As Captain Watson pointed out: '[w]hether you call it an infusion of England and African, it is Barbados that brought it together. But only Barbadian. Full stop. And we have maintained it.' Such concerns foreground the Landship as a 'unique and original organization that helps to define the singular identity that is Barbados' (Fergusson-Jacobs, 2013, p. 89).

The Landship both performs and roots a multifaceted set of shifting island, sea and ship relations. But it is not static or fixed to a particular past (slave, Navy or steam ship). It is

rather a re-working and re-folding of changing relationalities over time. Here the building up of steam does not stop at the arrival of the steam ship. For the original steam ships of 1827 were shortly followed by mail steamers. As Anim-Addo (2011) explains, prior to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's (RMSPC) introduction in the 1840s, packet boats carried mail between Britain and the West Indies. In 1832, a Jamaica packet boat travelled between Falmouth and Jamaica once a month, with stops at Barbados, St Vincent, Grenada, and Jamaica. However, after 1840 the RMSPC British government-subsidized steamship line transported letters, news, passengers and low-bulk freight in timetabled passages across the Atlantic and the Caribbean archipelago. As Anim-Addo (2011, p.26) explains, the introduction of mail ships facilitated internal and interisland migration, so that

'[t]he formerly enslaved deployed mobile practices, seeking out the best terms of employment in different spaces and, where required, sought seasonal and temporary employment to better establish land-based roots. In the case of Barbados, for example, 16,000 workers had emigrated by 1870, with many labourers engaged in seasonal work on other islands ... Oceanic and land-based movements were significant in this respect, and both steamship and sail transport played a role in facilitating mobility, which was marked by a particular post-emancipation politics.'

The next section of the paper engages this post-emancipation politics and the role of the Landship directly, but first it is important to explore how changes in shipping technology were once again folded into the Landship dance performance. Although a significant technological advance on sail boats, steam ships still lost cargo in perilous seas. For example, on 25th February 1931 the *Lady Drake* lost the equivalent of \$4,549.03 Canadian dollars in molasses (Supreme Court of Canada, 1937). Here the Landship Captain's instruction 'rough seas' to the 'crew' is a reminder of how the Landship performs the perilous materiality of the sea. Further Landship calls including 'iceberg ahead' extend the imaginary of dangerous seas into distant and treacherous oceans (Peters, 2012). The Landship does not then only model itself after the ship and pay homage to the ship, but it demonstrates how, like the island, ships are part of complex mobilities, connections and histories that exist always in relation to the changing sea. The dramatized movements of the Landship crew – swaying on board ship as it is tossed around by powerful waves –

foreground the sea as a hazardous force of nature that must be constantly negotiated, even with the technological advances of the steam ship.

SHIPPING SOCIETIES AND WORKERS' MOVEMENTS

So far my analysis has focused upon the Landship as a dance performance. It has documented how the Landship dynamically performs a complex array of island, sea and ship relations (slave, Navy, steam, mail ship, origin myths, and so forth). But now I want to turn to the social welfare function of the Landship. Although slave ship owners were heavily compensated by the British government for loss of earnings after abolition, welfare was not extended to the ex-slaves themselves. Indeed, to the contrary, in the 1800s the Barbadian government sought to suppress the growing workers' movements. But while the Barbados' Friendly Society social welfare organisation (closely related to the Landship) was often oppressed, the Landship itself seems to have been treated less harshly, for the following reasons. As Meredith (2015) points out, in a number of countries in the 1800s poorer people started to organise around military practices. There are, for example, some parallels between the Landship and the Beni people from Kenya; both adopting military drills and using military ranks. Whereas the Beni use army ranks, the Landship developed from Navy ranking systems. Indeed, the Landship extended island-sea relations as far as seems possible, so that instead of being registered as land charities these outmanoeuvring 'ships on land' were registered as 'Shipping Societies ... concerned with specific shipping rules and standards' (Ferguson-Jacobs, 2013, p. 27). It seems that this technicality of being registered as a Shipping Society enabled Landship members to outmanoeuvre the authorities and avoid the prosecution suffered by other working class organisations such as the Friendly Societies. Prosecution of Landship members was then made even more difficult because the powerful planter class was at this time purchasing cheap military uniforms for their workers to wear on mass. This planter class obviously did not want its own workers prosecuted and, realising this, Landship members would wear these military uniforms as a signal to the authorities to leave them alone (and, indeed, the Landship adopted these uniforms as their formal dress).

Although these differences between Landship and Friendly Societies seems to have made it less likely that Landship members would be prosecuted, in practice both institutions worked closely together. The Friendly Societies represented a 'network of grass roots organisations' articulating workers' concerns during the 1920s and 30s depression (Hunte, 2001, p. 134). Reinforced by the Landship, the Friendly Societies were 'the bedrock of political organisation and development' giving members insurance and social security through enforced savings (Hunte, 2001, p. 134). The associated Landship provided entertainment and attracted more people to Friendly Society meetings. As Captain Watson pointed out in an interview, during the early 1900s the Landship 'was the only means of entertainment for the grassroots. It never really attracted people of high status. And we make sure that it maintained that way. It maintains our needs.' Fletcher (1976, p. 73) states that nowhere else in the Caribbean did Friendly Societies 'thrive so well as in Barbados, where the ratio of society memberships to population (which stood at about one to two during the late 1940s) was the highest in the Caribbean, and also where the largest single Friendly Society in the Caribbean was located'. By 1946 half the population of Barbados were members of the 161 Friendly Societies on the island (Meredith, 2015). Supplementing the Friendly Societies the Landship was a 'powerful social factor in the lives of its members' (Griffin, 1997, p. 97). In the absence of support from government, the Landship was a form of self-help and survival for the working classes. As Griffin (1997, p.97) states, 'not only did landships highlight the organizational capacity of the working class, they also helped it develop its political consciousness, thereby demonstrating that workers were prepared for the challenges of organized mass political activity'. Thus while the Landship was criticised by colonial governors, it was later supported by the leaders of Barbados' independence movement, including Grantley Adams and Errol Barrow.

But if the Landship contributed to the Barbadian political consciousness in this way, in the Caribbean such concerns are never far removed from changing maritime relations (Featherstone, 2005). Here an important event took place when Marcus Garvey travelled to Barbados in 1937 and the Landship was singled out to act as his guard of honour. At this time women were also increasingly becoming members of the Landship and Garvey gave them the new title 'Stars'. This had the effect of reinforcing the connections between the Landship, gendered relations and the growing black working class consciousness of

the early twentieth century. As one interviewee said, women were involved in the Landship at a time when 'women were dismissed by the rest of Barbadian society'. And as another interviewee stressed, 'the Landship brought women into an important working class institution when others did not'. But if the Landship played a role in developing black working class consciousness and gendered relations in this way, once again, such developments were never far from dynamically changing island-ship relations. This is because Garvey's title 'Stars', still used in the Landship today, comes from the 'Black Star' shipping line Garvey introduced to repatriate those in the diaspora back to Africa. And while the Landship itself was not about repatriation, it nevertheless engaged these wider geo-political imaginaries of black working class consciousness, whilst at the same time routing and rooting them distinctively in the Land+ship (through, among other factors discussed earlier, large-scale movements of Barbadians on steam ships across the Caribbean archipelago in the post-emancipation era).

Probably a less important influence upon the incorporation of women in the Landship was the role of Barbadian women in World War II. Before June 1943 only men could be recruited into the Armed Forces, but on 16th June a notice appeared in Barbados' Press that women volunteers between ages of 18 and 35 were required for service in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. (Alleyne, 1999). Seventy-five women were sent to Washington and the UK, and in total eighty-five women were involved over the course of the war. But not only did the war take place after the number of women involved in the Landship had already exponentially grown, as just noted gendered relationships in the Landship were more obviously tied to an emerging black working class consciousness. As one interviewee said, the Landship is 'firmly rooted in the working class'; so that while from one perspective the Landship women's dress resembles a nurse (a middle class profession), from another it is a domestic servant uniform of the early 1900s^{iv}. For many interviewees involved in the Landship this more obviously 'grounds the women of the Landship in working class roots'.

CONCLUSION

The ship is only a miniature of the world in which we live (C.L.R. James, cited in DeLoughrey, 2007, p. 44-45).

This paper began by reviewing recent relational turns in island, oceanic and ship geographies. It then demonstrated – by way of the Landship – the need to now close down the conceptual gaps between these three different fields of research which have arisen in recent years. Too often research addresses ‘island’, ‘sea’ or ‘ship’ in isolation, rather than the cross-cutting and often dynamic relations between them. However, so far the reader would also be forgiven for thinking that the relational turn in island, oceanic and ship scholarship has been uncritically embraced across the board. From this it may then appear that all we now need to do – following the Landship – is encourage more conversation between the three different fields to move forward. However, before concluding this paper I want to explain why not everyone is embracing the relational turn. But I also want to show – in the interests of taking research forward – that some of their concerns may be misplaced.

In one of the most cited papers in island scholarship Pete Hay (2006, p. 22) surmises the relational turn by saying paradigms of ‘hard-edgedness and a consequent insularity are no longer much in favour within island studies, though the tendency seems to be less outright repudiation of them than a significant augmentation of the complexity with which we construct our understanding of islands’. Hay (2006, p. 23) criticises this turn, pointing to the dangers of dissolving islands ‘into a terrain-denying mesh’. According to Hay, islandness should still be seen as a heightened sensation of emotional boundedness and singularity. Hay (2006, p. 31) thus responds to the relational turn in island studies by reinforcing the distinctiveness of islands, writing that islands are ‘places—special places, paradigmatic places, topographies of meaning in which the qualities that construct place are dramatically distilled’. He wants island studies’ scholars to focus more upon questions of locality and place, which he now feels are losing ground.

But while Hay raises some thought-provoking points, does the relational turn necessarily mean that we *must* lose the distinctive insularity of islands, surely the most characteristic story of islandness? Does paying attention to complex and shifting island, sea and ship relations – as in the Landship – now downplay the distinctiveness of Barbados as an

island and culture? Or does it, to the contrary, actually foreground distinctiveness? Calling up mobilities, connections and histories of the island and ship in relation to the sea, does not, I contend, dissolve islands into a terrain denying mesh. Instead, it can lead to a greater appreciation of the individuality of island culture. For Captain Watson and other Landship members interviewed 'the Landship is the product of Africa, England, the ship, the sea – but it is Barbados!' So foregrounding the importance of shifting relations – both theoretically and empirically – actually brings the distinctiveness of island life to the fore.

This position echoes the argument of Edouard Glissant (1997a) that island life is the product of a *relational rootedness; that is, a coming to consciousness of different relations in a particular locale* (Dash, 2006). Glissant (1997a, p. 33) explains how island life in the Caribbean is composed of the 'accumulation of sediments' as life emerges from how matter, meaning, depth and totality are intensely interrelated and expressed in particular island contexts. As in the case of the Landship, Glissant's work does not dichotomise Relation^v with distinctiveness. To the contrary, it *foregrounds how Relation intensifies in given island settings*. What I take from this is that whether we consider the Landship in terms of the actualisation of origin myths like Moses Ward, or the African man-o-war; or the changing relations of Navy, steam and mail ships, the evolution of Tuk music, or Marcus Garvey's 'Black Star' liner – relationality is not the enemy of the particular island, but is its very condition. The Landship is the actualisation of dynamically changing relations; but this does not shift the register of debate away from the uniqueness of the island form. To the contrary, the Landship is the expression of what I would call a 'relational rootedness' – not nomadic flight from the island, but the accumulation of island distinctiveness in its own right.

For Glissant (1997a, p. 191), islands anchor the unique and particular burning principle of each community in Relation to 'the Other'. But to be clear about this 'Other', it is not a 'root' to be found on a continental mainland (such as England or Africa). Nor is it about foregrounding the island's 'right to difference' when compared to and in relation with mainland continents as monolithic categories (Glissant, 1997a, p. 191). The islands of the Caribbean and the Landship did not develop 'difference' while Europe or Africa remained 'the same'. Rather, for Glissant, all developed co-extensively through the *opening up of Relation*. For those unfamiliar with Glissant's rather complex writing style, Massey (2005,

p. 140) more straightforwardly says ‘what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing upon a history and a geography of thens and theres).’ For both Massey and Glissant, this concern with relationality does not necessarily prescribe lines of flight or being nomadic, because it is rather about *investing in place* – through, in Glissant’s terminology, foregrounding a totality and non-centrist web of relations fraught with tensions and diversity. Here Glissant makes a ‘continued commitment to location’ (Burns, 2009, p. 105) and ‘even at his most ‘Deleuzian’ Glissant does not yield to a radical poetics of deterritorialisation but hangs on to the specifics (opacité, densité) of locale’ (Dash, 2006, p. 67). As in the Landship, emphasising the relational does not deny the distinctiveness of islands; but, to the contrary, *foregrounds the intensification of Relation in locality and island culture*.

The Landship demonstrates such relational rootedness in many ways. For example, performative dance manoeuvres such as ‘kick astern’, ‘side rock’, ‘full steam ahead’, ‘engineer, stoke the fire,’ and ‘rough seas’ are not flights from the island into the sea or ship. Rather, performed for Barbadian’s in the Landship ‘dock’, they actualise a complex range of island, sea and ship relations on the ground – including, among other things, colonial and capitalist relations, and workers movements – by rooting them in the Land+ship. As noted, this rooting has, among other things, helped shape Barbadian working class consciousness associated with naval practices and models of social hierarchy and order; but it is also associated with changing archipelagic steam and mail ship relations, and new gendered relations associated with Garvey’s ‘Black Stars’. Here the relational rootedness of the Landship is not so much about the constituent components of the Landship as ‘island’, ‘sea’ and ‘ships’, than what Glissant (1997a, p190) calls the “irreducible singularity” of all three coming together.

In concluding this paper I therefore want to once again re-iterate this point that rootedness always works in a tidalectic relationship with routes in the Landship (DeLoughrey, 2007). Indeed, we cannot understand why the Landship declined in the latter half of the twentieth century unless we continue to address evolving interconnections between islands, seas and ships (building upon such work as Steinberg, 2005; Lambert et al, 2006; Stratford et al, 2011; Anim-Addo, 2011; 2013; 2014; Steinberg

and Peters, 2015). This decline is associated with many things – the Landships' and Friendly Societies' social security functions being replaced by the state; the arrival of other forms of entertainment in Barbados (such as TV and radio), and working class movements being less prevalent today. But one of the most obvious reasons for decline is the changing role of the ship itself in Barbadian life. Until the mid-1900s trade in Barbados depended almost entirely upon sail and then steam shipping. These ships were inextricably linked to the Landship performance and the emergence of a working class consciousness. However, as the 1900s progressed:

'[t]he most important technological innovation in transport was the container ship, a concept unknown before 1956. Piling sealed metal boxes of standard size on a vessel finally made shipping cheap, but the technology also created major changes in the way goods were distributed geographically and in the scale and organization of ports. ... Whereas the wharfs of the Caribbean had previously been labour intensive and vital sites of working class protest with political implications, particularly in the 1930s, by the 1970s, the major ports employed fewer workers and were dominated by massive capital equipment. Often, new sites had to be found to meet the needs of the technologies, moving shipping away from the old town centres. Growth in the size of oil tankers had similar effects' (Higman, 2011, p.296-297).

Whereas ports and ships were hives of activity for the working classes in the 1930s (the time when most Landship 'docks' also existed), by the 1970s the situation had dramatically changed. The arrival of container ships was a pivotal moment in human history that transformed twenty-first century space-time imaginaries, movements of labour and capital. No longer were ports and docks breeding grounds for working class movements such as the Landship; but, as Higman says, they became dominated by massive technology and equipment instead. The arrival of the container ship in the Caribbean (along with oil tankers and aeroplanes) now suggested the 'Landship belonged to a bygone age', as one Landship interviewee said.

But the Landship is not dead yet. Ever-connected to changing island, sea and ship relations, today the Landship is adapting by performing for cruise ship passages who visit Barbados. As in the case of the limbo, this once again raises questions over 'what it means

to express a distinctive island culture', as one Landship interviewee said, and how this expression has often been linked to powerful capitalist relations that work through changing island, sea and ship relations. How the Landship will change through interactions with cruise ships is a question for future research. Could it now mimic and perform on-board cruise ship activities as well? The answer from one Landship member was 'Why not? The Landship is both fun and serious'. The Landship has always been immersed in the social and cultural geographies of fluctuating island, sea and ship relations; while simultaneously raising associated questions of oppression and resistance in island life.

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ⁱⁱ My understanding of 'archipelagic thinking' relates to Glissant's (1997b) use of the term in *Traite du Tout-Monde*. But Glissant's archipelagic thinking is more focused upon how the Caribbean is exemplary of changing patterns of globalisation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mainly from Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togoland and Dahomey, the African Ananci spider folklore is an important part of Barbadian culture. Ananci is a trickster-figure outwitting figures of authority by cunning and trickster stories were shared and adapted by slaves.

^{iv} Thanks also to Professor Jean Besson for pointing this out.

^v Glissant (1997a) capitalizes 'Relation'.